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ABSTRACT

This student guide is intended to assist persons employed as supervisors in giving orders and instructions. Discussed in the first four sections are the following topics: good instructions, ways of asking people to do things, followup after giving instructions, and written instructions. Each of these sections contains an introduction, sections of instructional text that are interspersed with reinforcing learning activities, and a section summary. The fifth part of the guide includes a series of performance checks (an end check, a tutor check, and a work-based project). Concluding the guide is a unit review that reviews the objectives addressed in the guide, describes related extension courses, and lists recommended reference materials. (MN)

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An Open Tech Project

SUPERVISING COMMUNICATION

64:Orders and Instructions

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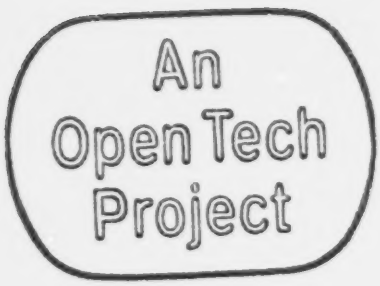
64: ORDERS AND INSTRUCTIONS

Diana Thomas



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Diana Thomas
Orders and Instructions (Number 64 in the CHOICE SERIES of learning units)

Series Editor: Harry V Pardue
Northern Regional Management Centre.

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WORKING GUIDE TO THIS UNIT IN YOUR DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

This Unit is now your personal property - it's not for handing back to your training officer or to a tutor. It is your working book.

The Contents will increase in value to you each time you write on one of its pages. This is a working text for your personal notes - without notes its value is limited.

Qualifications forget about certificates and diplomas - you don't need them for this programme. What you do need is the wish:-

* to do your job better
* for personal development

Your study time is really up to you - we guess you will need about 8 hours in total. But it's your time - spend as long as you like.

How am I doing? you can judge for yourself by checking out how well you cope with the tasks we call Activities and Self Checks which occur throughout the unit. You can also get the Tutor Check and/or the Work Based Project to your tutor for an unbiased view of your progress.

Work Pace it's really up to you and depends on your interest. However, if you do well on the Activities and Self Checks, you could afford to speed up a little. Of course, if you don't do as well as you expect then you could slow down a little or flick back into the unit for a quick review of the more difficult ideas.

When in doubt - ask or seek help from:

* your family and friends
* colleagues at work
* your company training staff
* other open learners
* your tutor, by phone, by a visit to your support centre or by dropping your tutor a line through the post.

Don't worry if what you learn doesn't seem to be of use to you now, remember that times change - it may be useful one day. Anyway, just knowing more improves personal confidence.

So now make a start:-

64: ORDERS AND INSTRUCTIONS by Diana Thomas

ABOUT THIS UNIT

Being a supervisor means you are in the front line as far as giving instructions is concerned. If your instructions are not fully understood or are carried out wrongly, the mistakes can be expensive, annoying and time-wasting and the responsibility for them is down to you. But it's more than just a question of getting the job done. Your authority as a supervisor and your whole relationship with your workteam can be seen in the way you give your instructions.

Whatever your work place, being able to give instructions well is one of the most important skills you need as a supervisor.

IN THIS UNIT WE WILL:

* identify what makes an effective instruction
* identify the different ways in which you can give instructions
* examine how you can match your instructions to individual members of your workteam so they respond best
* consider the importance of follow-up

AUDIO TAPE Side 1

Before you continue through the unit, you should listen to Side 1 of the audio tape that accompanies the unit. You will find it useful if you refer to the unit objectives shown below whilst you listen to the tape. You may wish to make the objectives clearer to yourself by making a note or two on the page as you listen.

OBJECTIVES

When you have completed this unit you will be BETTER ABLE TO:

* give planned instructions which say precisely what you mean
* select the way of giving an instruction that best meets the needs of the job
* get the best response from your workteam
* monitor results to make sure the work has been done and your workteam's attitude is favourable
* decide when written instructions are necessary

PART A GOOD INSTRUCTIONS

1 Introduction

We'd all agree that instructions are important - they get the job started and move it along to a finish. They also express your authority in relation to your workteam, so it's vital to instruct properly or your authority, as well as the job, will suffer.

Look at this actual incident:

> A supervisor says to an apprentice, handing him a 90 centimetres length of expensive tubing. "There's a rush job on. Take 30 centimetres off that and let me have it trimmed and polished as soon as you can. Careful what you're doing - it's the last length of that in stock."
>
> The apprentice cut of 35 centimetres to allow for trimming and duly gave it to the supervisor shortly afterwards, bevelled and polished.
>
> The supervisor blew up! "Didn't you listen to a word I said? It was a 60 centimetres length I wanted, not this heap of scrap."

A misunderstood instruction - both men probably feel angry as a result and the job can't now be done. A moment's planning could have avoided the problem completely.

You can probably think of a similar example from your own work place. It may even have happened to you.

ACTIVITY 1
Time guide
2 mins

In the incident just given, who was responsible for the misunderstanding? The supervisor or the apprentice?

* _____

_____

You may think the apprentice should have checked that he understood properly but the responsibility for getting the job done was the supervisor's and he can't fairly blame the apprentice for the misunderstanding.

2 Six Factors

We said we can improve our instructions with a moment's thought. So, what's in a moment's thought that's so helpful? The answer I'd give is that there are SIX factors - you may see these factors as questions to ask of yourself before giving an instruction. Let me explain what I mean by these six factors.

2.1 The WHAT factor

We can explore this through an activity.

ACTIVITY 2
Time guide
3 mins

Take a few minutes to note down what you think was wrong with the supervisor's instruction in this incident.

*

We can probably agree that the supervisor didn't say clearly enough WHAT he wanted. You might also have thought that he didn't take the apprentice's lack of experience into account and he ought not to have reacted in the way he did.

So the first factor in planning a good instruction is WHAT:

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO BE DONE?

WHAT DO YOU WANT THE END RESULT TO BE?

ACTIVITY 3
Time guide
3 mins

Looking at our incident again, write in a few words what the supervisor wanted the end result to be.

*

He wanted a piece of finished tubing 60 centimetres long. He knew that but he didn't include the vital WHAT factor in his instructions. A more effective instruction might have been:

"I want a piece of this tubing 60 centimetres long. Cut it to size, trim and polish it straight away, please."

ACTIVITY 4
Time guide
10 mins

Now look at the following cases. Jot down what you think would be the clearest instruction the supervisor could give to get the end result required in each case.

1) You are a supervisor in the food section of a multiple store.

You have to display a new brand of cakes - Crumble Creams.

The best customer response to new goods is if they are displayed near the way in.

The brand name is new so customers need to read it easily.

Company policy is to stack boxed cakes no more than three high.

You ask a new assistant, who has recently started work in your section, to do the job.

Your instruction would be:

* _____

_____

_____

2) You are a supervisor in the Parks and Recreation Department of a local authority.

You want all the hybrid tea-roses in a particular bed pruned.

You want dead, diseased and spindly stems cut out completely.

To encourage maximum flower growth, stems should be pruned back to half their length.

You prune by making a diagonal cut which slopes up to the outside of the stem.

The cut should come out ¼ inch above an outside dormant bud.

Your instruction would be:

* _____

_____

_____

You probably suggested something like this:

1) "Would you stack these Crumble Creams at the end of the display stand by the way in please. Stack them not more than three high, horizontally so you can read the name as you come into the section."

2) "I'd like you to prune all the tea-roses in this bed. Cut anything dead, diseased or spindly right out and cut all the other stems back to half the length they are now. Make sure you cut diagonally, sloping up to the outside of the stem, coming out ¼ inch above a dormant bud on the outside of the stem."

   (And, of course, you'd probably demonstrate what you meant.)

It doesn't matter at this point exactly what words you used so long as you included all the information needed to allow your staff to do the job right first time.

You may have thought of some other problems when you were considering our examples.

For instance:

1) Has the part of the display area you plan to use for Crumble Creams to be cleared of other stock first?

   How wide is the display to be?

   Have you more stock than you can stack three high?

   If so, what should be done with the surplus?

2) Has the trainee got the right tools for pruning roses? Do you want him to shape the bushes or just prune all branches to the same length?

   What should he do with the stems he cuts off?

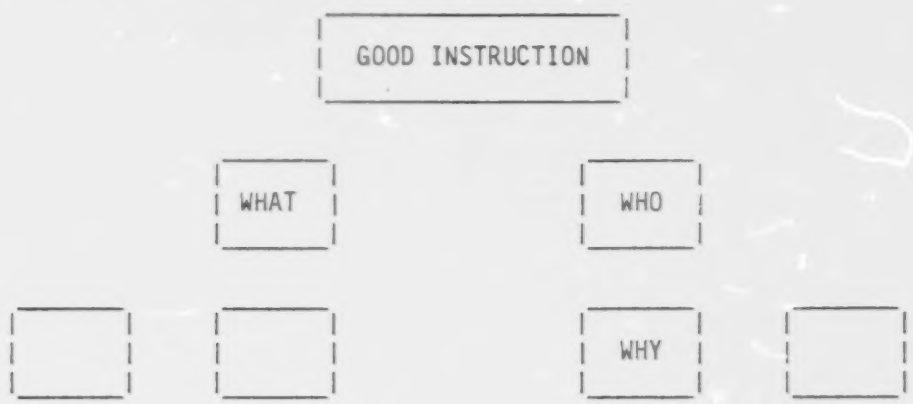
So perhaps in practice our instructions would have to be still more precise. In both these examples we have assumed we are dealing with inexperienced staff. Perhaps somebody who has been in the job longer would not need such a detailed instruction, but don't depend on it. Because the end result is clear in <u>your</u> head doesn't mean it is clear in his.

So far, we've established that:

EVERY INSTRUCTION MUST MAKE CLEAR WHAT IS REQUIRED

ACTIVITY 5
Time guide
5 mins

Can you think of any other factors which might need to be included in a good instruction? I have put in two more to start you off. Write them into the blocks below.



You might have thought of some different factors but I think you might find these ones most helpful - what, who, why, how, when and where. Asking yourself each of these questions is a useful discipline.

We have looked at the WHAT factor, now let's look at each of the other factors in turn:

2.2 The WHO Factor

Usually, of course, you will be talking to one particular person or group of people and it is quite clear who the instruction is for. But a vague, general instruction to no one is no instruction at all.

"One of you tidy that loading bay," said generally as you walk through the area may well mean that the loading bay doesn't get tidied and, since you didn't ask anyone in particular to do it, you haven't much control over whether it's done or not. You could also be accused of lacking courtesy and good manners by not addressing people personally.

If we have someone in mind to ask, then we should ask them clearly so they know they have been asked. Then there can't be any doubt as to who is repsonsible for carrying out the instruction.

2.3 The WHY Factor

Warehouse supervisor to fork lift truck driver:

> "See those 50 cases. Stack them in bay 15.
> On their sides, not upright".

This instruction says clearly WHAT is to be done but does it still leaves something to be desired?

ACTIVITY 6
Time guide
2 mins

Take a moment or two to think whether it could be improved and jot down your ideas.

*

You may have had several ideas about how that instruction could be improved but what seems to me the main thing wrong is that the warehouse supervisor hasn't given the driver any reason WHY these cases should be stacked on their sides instead of upright.

Let's say they contain a volatile fluid in corked bottles. If the corks dry out because the bottles are stored upright, the contents may evaporate. And the fumes are harmful, what's more:

If the supervisor explained WHY, the driver would be more likely to remember to stack the cases on their sides and to pass this bit of information on.

Of course, if the driver knows the job well, he may not need to be told WHY everytime, but even so, an occasional reminder, even to the 'old hands', may prevent a slip. So:

EXPLAINING WHY SHOULD REINFORCE THE INSTRUCTION

Here are two more instructions which don't say WHY.

ACTIVITY 7
Time guide
3 mins

Note down what you think the response to them is likely to be.

1) "Work a double shift tonight, will you Harry?"

* _____

_____

2)

MEMORANDUM	
From: SAFETY OFFICER	To: ALL PERSONNEL
Subject: PLANT SAFETY	Date: 1st OCTOBER 1985
No transistor radios or tape recorders are to be brought into the plant. Failure to observe this will result in instant dismissal. V.V. Jones	

Likely response:

* _____

_____

1) Well, Harry might be glad of the overtime but it is equally likely that he would resent the imposition of being expected to work a double shift without knowing WHY. And the resentment he may feel can take a long time to wear off.

2) The threat of instant dismissal may make sure that the regulation about radios and tape recorders is obeyed but, as in the previous example, the lack of any reason WHY is likely to create resentment. And what could be seen as the Safety Officer's high-handed attitude can only widen the gap between management and the workforce.

Look at this way of instructing Harry:

> "Work a double shift tonight, will you Harry? Tom's off sick and there isn't a leading hand who can cope with that rush order."

8

This is more likely to get a favourable response from Harry even though his feelings about working a double shift may not have changed.

Let's look again at the memo from the Safety Officer.

MEMORANDUM	
From: SAFETY OFFICER	To: ALL PERSONNEL
Subject: PLANT SAFETY	Date: 1st OCTOBER 1985
No transistor radios or tape recorders are to be brought into the plant. Failure to observe this will result in instant dismissal. V.V. Jones	

The reason the company has banned radios and tape recorders is that the batteries they contain are intrinsically unsafe. When they are switched on and off they can produce a spark. Since the company's production areas contain a high level of solvent vapours, there is the risk of a serious explosion.

ACTIVITY 8
Time guide
10 mins

Rewrite the memo from the Safety Officer in the light of the information you now have.

MEMORANDUM	
From: SAFETY OFFICER	To: ALL PERSONNEL
Subject: PLANT SAFETY	Date: 1st OCTOBER 1985

I would rewrite the memo something like this:

MEMORANDUM	
From: SAFETY OFFICER	To: ALL PERSONNEL
Subject: PLANT SAFETY	Date: 1st OCTOBER 1985

No transistor radios or tape recorders are to be brought into the plant. When they are switched on or off the batteries may produce a spark which could ignite the solvent vapours present in some areas of the plant and cause a serious explosion.

In view of the seriousness of this, failure to comply with this instruction may result in instant dismissal.

V.V. Jones

Yours may not be exactly the same but I hope you've included WHY the instruction has been given - the risk of explosion in production areas.

Given that piece of information, the regulation seems reasonable and so does the penalty for not complying with it. So:

TELLING PEOPLE WHY IS LIKELY TO IMPROVE ATTITUDES

as well as reinforcing your instruction. However, we need not take it too far.

Supposing this is the information the Safety Officer has when he sits down to write the memo.

You know of several cases of factory explosions caused by electrical discharge from batteries.

In one case, in a factory similar in size and range of products made to yours, a very serious explosion was caused by a spark from a mobile crane igniting an invisible cloud of cyclohexane which was leaking from a badly sealed pipe.

Six people were killed and many injured.

Forty gallon drums containing inflammable liquids were found to have travelled several hundred yards when they exploded, taking them well outside the perimeter fence.

You have a school with over a thousand children within a few yards of your perimeter fence.

ACTIVITY 9
Time guide
3 mins

If you had the chance to re-write your memo now would you make it: more detailed
the same
less detailed?

In a few words, jot down why you made the choice you did.

*

I would leave mine the same. If you decided not to change yours in the light of the new information you had, you probably agree with me that too long an explanation can be boring, confusing or both.

GIVE YOUR WORKTEAM ONE GOOD REASON WHY AND, IF THEY WANT OR NEED FURTHER EXPLANATION, BE PREPARED TO GIVE IT

EXTENSION 1
page 81

This point is well covered in this BBC video and discusses the value of letting people know more about the jobs they do.

Let's check what we've learnt so far before we move on.

SELF CHECK 1
Time guide
5 mins

1) What so far are the three factors which make up a good instruction?

* _____

* _____

* _____

2) What must you have clear in your own mind when you say WHAT you want done?

* _____

3) What are the two reasons for explaining WHY when you give an instruction?

* _____

* _____

4) Should you always explain all you know about WHY an instruction should be carried out?

* _____

The answers to this self check are here in the following words, so you'll need to check your answers carefully. 1) So far we have covered three of six factors, the first is 'what'. We need to know what we want done and what we want the end result to be. Our second factor was 'who'. You must decide who you want to do it and our final factor was 'why'. There is often more than one reason why, but mostly one good reason is enough. 2) In order to choose the right words you must know what you want the end result to be and also what it is that you want done. 3) Giving a clear explanation why something should be done helps to improve their attitude toward you and the job and it will also reinforce the instruction and give it some urgency and importance. 4) We have said already that too much explanation might confuse rather than clarify so we suggested that one good reason is usually enough in the first instance.

2.4 The HOW Factor

Now let's look for a few minutes at the HOW factor in any instruction:

ACTIVITY 10
Time guide
4 mins

Think of any instruction you regularly give where you should, in some circumstances explain HOW. Take a couple of minutes to note what you mean by HOW you want this job done:

* _____
_____
_____
_____

Obviously, since everybody's job is different, there isn't one right answer to this but I hope you could group your answers broadly under the following headings: by what method? using what equipment? in what order?

You may also have thought about HOW you ought to give the instruction and you're absolutely right that this is important. We'll be looking at this later.

Often, if the job is routine and the team are used to doing it, you may decide you don't need to explain HOW and that your workteam would resent it if you did. You're right, of course, but even in a routine operation, there can be good reasons why you should sometimes explain HOW you want the job done.

ACTIVITY 11
Time guide
3 mins

Take a few minutes to list THREE reasons why you might need to explain HOW you want even a routine job done.

* _____
* _____
* _____

My list would include:

* new staff who need training in all operations, even the very routine ones

* habits are becoming slipshod and the workteam needs a reminder of the correct method

* you may have had one or two complaints recently and you need to tighten up the job

* you want to introduce a slight change of method in a routine operation which will be quicker, easier or cheaper

* you want to introduce the use of a new material or piece of equipment in an otherwise routine operation

* you know more than your workteam about how and when your team's part of the job fits in with other activities in your workplace

Your list will probably be more detailed than mine and more closely related to your job.

Let's look at the last item on my list in more detail for a moment.

* you know more than your workteam about how and when your team's part of the job fits in with other activities in your workplace

Almost everybody feels that higher management should keep them better informed than they do. That is almost a condition of human life! But even so, you probably know more about what is going on at work than the rest of your workteam. It may be obvious to you that some jobs are more important or urgent than others - it may not be so obvious to your workteam unless you make it clear in your instruction.

Look at this example:

ACTIVITY 12
Time guide
2 mins

Monday 9.00

Anne James, Office Supervisor, gives Susan Jenkins, shorthand typist her work for the morning.

* Six letters on audiotape from the Sales Manager

* A report for the Sales Manager which runs to 25 handwritten pages

* the summary of weekly production figures which Susan does every week and which have to be on the Managing Director's desk by midday

If you were Susan Jenkins which would you do first?

* _____

You might have chosen any of the three tasks - the letters, perhaps, because they were short or the report because it was long! Perhaps you would have given the summary of production figures priority because it is a job done on a regular basis and it goes directly to the Manager Director. So up to here we have no real basis for deciding.

If we add to the information you already have, the fact that Susan Jenkins prides herself on doing a good job on the summary of production figures and that in the past the Managing Director has complimented her on her efficiency in getting the figures out, then it is more likely than ever that she will tackle this job first, regardless of how long it will take.

And there's no apparent reason why she shouldn't.

But now put yourself in the position of the Office Supervisor, Anne James. When the Sales Manager gave you the audiotape and the draft report, he said he wanted to sign the letters before he left for the airport at 10.30 and he wanted the report when he returned from Brussels the following evening. The summary of production figures always takes an hour or so.

You would probably now have a clear idea of HOW you want the work done - that is, in what order you want it done.

ACTIVITY 13
Time guide
2 mins

In what order would you now tell Susan Jenkins to do the morning's work?

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

I would tell Susan Jenkins to do the work in this order. I'd start with the letters for the Sales Manager to sign by 10.30; then move to the summary of weekly production figures - if it takes about an hour, she still has time to meet the midday deadline comfortably; then I'd ask Susan to start the report although she probably wouldn't finish it before lunch.

You may have suggested that Susan Jenkins should do the summary of weekly production figures first because they go straight to the Managing Director and <u>then</u> tackle the letters. It would be just possible to do it this way and meet the Sales Manager's 10.30 deadline but this would be cutting it very fine and Susan Jenkins would have to work unnecessarily hard.

THE MOST IMPORTANT JOB ISN'T NECESSARILY THE MOST URGENT

One thing is certain, if Anne James, the office supervisor, didn't give precise instructions and Susan Jenkins started with the 25 page report, there would certainly be a log jam of work later that morning and it would be the supervisor's responsibility.

If we assume that you have decided you do need to explain HOW a job is to be done, you have one last point to consider.

Perhaps you know the saying 'I thought I did what I thought you meant'!

We should keep that in front of us as a reminder that words can easily mean different things to different people.

Look at this instruction for example:

> When the tank is almost empty, partly close the valve and carefully but quickly release the control lever.

This instruction is all about HOW a certain procedure should be carried out but as a guide to somebody actually trying to do the job it is useless.

ACTIVITY 14
Time guide
5 mins

Here is the instruction again.

Underline the words which seem to you to be unhelpful and then write brief notes at the side to say what you think is wrong.

When the tank * _____

is almost empty, * _____

partly close the * _____

valve and carefully * _____

but quickly release * _____

the control lever. * _____

I would make the following comments on this instruction - possibly you noticed other things which you felt could be improved.

When the tank	This is OK
is <u>almost empty</u>	How much is the tank supposed to contain when it is 'almost empty'?
<u>partly close</u> the	What does 'partly close' mean?
valve and <u>carefully</u>	How am I supposed to be careful? What danger?
but quickly release	How quickly? And how do I release it?
the control lever.	This is OK

Perhaps you would never give such an unhelpful instruction but it's nevertheless very easy when you are under pressure or tired to use words very generally - you know what you mean and you just hope your listener does too.

2.5 The WHEN factor

ACTIVITY 15
Time guide
1 min

Fill in the missing word.

Thinking about WHEN is an important part of your planning. Part of your job as a supervisor is to make efficient use of your workteam's _____.

I hope you decided that 'time' was the most appropriate answer. You might well have said something like: ability; resources; skills since these are also important but, in this case it is time - WHEN - that we are thinking about. WHEN is important where we are:

* meeting deadlines set by other people or departments
* planning and controlling a reasonable day's work for your workteam which, so far as you are able to judge, avoids idle periods and log-jams of work

So there are two questions based on WHEN which you should ask yourself before you give an instruction for a job.

ACTIVITY 16
Time guide
3 mins

What do you think these two questions about WHEN should be?

* _____

* _____

I would suggest something like this:

What's the deadline?)
or) - meeting a deadline
When does it have to be finished by?)

and

What do I want done next?)
or) - planning and control
What else needs to be done?)

Your actual questions may be different from mine but I hope we agreed on including these two aspects:

WHEN IS IMPORTANT FOR MEETING A DEADLINE
AND FOR PLANNING AND CONTROL

If there is a deadline then you need to include this WHEN in your instructions. If you can, allow a comfortable margin for unexpected problems.

Let's have another look at the typing pool example we used when we were talking about HOW.

ACTIVITY 17
Time guide
2 mins

Monday 9.00

Anne James, Office Supervisor, gives Susan Jenkins, shorthand typist her work for the morning.

* Six letters on audiotape from the Sales Manager

* A report for the Sales Manager which runs to 25 handwritten pages

* the summary of weekly production figures which Susan does every week and which have to be on the Managing Director's desk by midday

The Sales Manager wants to sign the letters before he leaves for the airport at 10.30.

If we assume that Anne James wants the letters typed first what should she say to Susan Jenkins about WHEN?

*

I think she should tell her that they need to be done by about 10.15 so that the Sales Manager has time to sign them before 10.30. (Your opinion on what is a comfortable margin to allow for something going wrong may differ from mine.)

Perhaps her full instruction could go something like this:

"There are six letters here from the Sales Manager and quite a long report. I know you've got the summary of weekly production figures on top, but would you do the letters first, please? We need them by 10.15 so he can sign them before he leaves for the airport at 10.30. That'll leave you time to do the summary by midday alright, won't it? The report isn't so urgent. It's not needed until tomorrow evening so it'll be alright if you just make a start on it this morning."

Of course, she would say this slowly and perhaps repeat it - there's a lot of information here.

So Susan Jenkins has a clear idea of WHEN her work is required and has a fairly full but controlled morning's work. Of course, if the Managing Director suddenly demands some lengthy work of his own by 11.00 then this could all change. But the best laid plans of mice and men . . . !

Assuming we want the letters done first, which do you think would be the better instruction to Susan Jenkins:

to do the letters by 10.15

or

to do the letters as soon as possibe

'As soon as possible' although sounding urgent does not mean anything in particular. For instance, if she was told to do the letters 'as soon as possible', Susan Jenkins wouldn't know whether she should do them immediately or as soon as she could after she had completed her regular weekly job on the production figures to which she gave a high priority. I would say to do the letters by 10.15 is the better instruction.

She has no way of knowing WHEN the work is required, unless she is clearly told.

And, as you probably know from experience, the more often 'As soon as possible' is tacked on to the end of an instruction, the less notice anybody takes of it.

As part of your planning, you will probably have formed an idea of how long a particular job will take. If the job has not been done before, you need to find out how long it will take.

Either way, the planning and control element of WHEN may need to be built into your instruction. This needn't be anything heavy-handed but it does need to be there most of the time.

Comments like these will usually be enough to make sure that your plan is followed and your control of the job maintained:

'Let me know when you've finished'

or

'I'd like that done by midday. Alright?'

ACTIVITY 18
Time guide
4 mins

Jot down any more similar questions or comments you could use in your instructions which say WHEN and reinforce your planning and control.

* _____

* _____

* _____

Everybody's answers will vary according to his or her particular job and the list could be endless.

For a start, I suggest the following:

* 'Let me know if there's any problem finishing that by lunchtime.'

* 'I don't think that will take more than an hour, do you?'

* 'Can you finish that by 4.00?'

We'll look at this question of control further in our section on Follow-up.

Finally, you might need to consider where and WHEN you give the instruction. Sometimes, of course, this is outside your control and you have to give instructions where and when the need arises. But it's worth considering your choice of WHEN wherever possible.

For example, if you are giving instructions to a new member of your workteam, he may be feeling nervous, unsure, self-conscious. A consideration of WHEN can make things easier for him. We also must consider the related WHERE factor - let's do this now:

2.6 The WHERE factor

In most work places there are distractions which can make it hard for newcomers to concentrate. Once used to them they can largely ignore them but, when you are giving instructions to a newcomer, try to find somewhere where there are few distractions.

ACTIVITY 19
Time guide
3 mins

Jot down what you think are two likely distractions to a newcomer in your workplace.

* _____

* _____

Of course, your answers will depend on the environment in which you work but likely distractions are:

* machine noise
* vibration
* fumes
* heat
* humidity

and most of all

* other people

These may be other members of the workteam, customers or members of the public who may be within earshot.

REFERENCE 1
page 82

"EFFECTIVE SPEAKING AND PRESENTATION FOR THE COMPANY EXECUTIVE" takes a slightly different look at preparing and giving an order. You might find it interesting to compare this with what we've discussed here.

Well, having looked at the factors which make up a good instruction, in PART B we'll be looking at the WAYS you can give an instruction.

First though, you might like to recap what we've done by doing a Self Check:

SELF CHECK 2
Time guide
5 mins

1) Note down two reasons why you should tell your workteam the order in which you want work done?

   * _____

   * _____

2) If you are working to a deadline, is it better to give a time by which you think a job should be finished or to say 'as soon as possible'?

   * _____

Fill in the blanks with a suitable word or words in the next three statements.

3) Thinking about WHEN a job should be done helps you make effective use of your workteam's _____.

4) Making it clear when you want a job finished by maintains your _____.

5) When instructing new trainees you need to think particularly about _____ an instruction is given.

6) Write down our six factors which will help us give good instructions:

   * _____ * _____ * _____

   * _____ * _____ * _____

7) What are the two benefits of explaining WHY a job needs doing?

   * _____

   * _____

The answers to this self check are here in the following words so you'll need to check your answers carefully. The answer to 1) is to meet deadlines and to avoid a log jam of work. You might have written to achieve an even flow of work which is just as good. Now to question 2) It is always better to give a time by which you think a job should be finished 3) You may have said effort, but in this context time is more correct 4) I think control or authority would do here. They were both mentioned 5) This is a difficult one. I would put where, you might recall we said that the presence of other people could be a bit off-putting to new starters 6) Our six factors - what, who, why, how, when and where. Of course these can be put in any order 7) Tne two benefits are that it reinforces the instruction and it improves attitudes.

3 Summary

WHAT A good instruction must make clear WHAT is to be done. This involves deciding what you want the end result to be.

WHO It must be clear WHO is to do the job.

WHY You are more likely to get a good response if you explain WHY the instruction is given. It REINFORCES the instruction and improves ATTITUDES.

HOW Explaining HOW is important to new members of the workteam and in making sure the right method is used by people who know the job well.

You may also need to make clear HOW, to clarify the order in which you want things done and so help to:

* meet deadlines

* give a well-planned day's work

WHEN Deciding WHEN work should be completed by and making this clear in an instruction is important for planning and control. It will avoid idle periods and log jams of work.

WHERE an instruction is given may be particularly important for a new member of the workteam. It's best to avoid instructing in places where there's too much distraction, eg noise, heat, humidity and fumes. Where new starters are concerned other people too close by can be distracting.

PART B WAYS OF ASKING

1 Introduction

All supervisors have to tell people what to do - that's an unavoidable part of the job - and you have to find a way of doing it which you feel happy with and which your workteam understands.

This has to take into account:

the circumstances of the job

your personality

the feelings and expectations of your workteam

For instance, if you are a quiet, considerate person you may never feel really at ease giving or responding to barked commands.

And if you are new to the job you may have to come to terms with the way orders were given before. Your workteam may have come to expect a certain style and may take a while to adjust to a different one. For example, a workteam used to jumping to military-style commands may not take much notice if you merely hint what you would like them to do.

2 Telling people what to do

Telling people what to do can take the form of:

* orders
* requests
* hints

We'll be considering the advantages and disadvantages of them all.

Your workteam will always expect you to give clear, well thought out instructions and, as a general rule, they will also expect to be asked, not told, and to be asked politely.

As long as, when you give an instruction, you have thought about all the factors we looked at in part A, your workteam should be able to do the job efficiently.

HOW THEY FEEL ABOUT IT MAY DEPEND ON HOW YOU ASK THEM

EXTENSION 1 page 81

The need to consider their feelings and to deal with each member of your workteam as individuals is discussed in a BBC video. The single message is:

PEOPLE ARE DIFFERENT AND VALUE AN INDIVIDUAL APPROACH

2.1 Orders

These are all orders:

A

> Officer to soldiers:
>
> 'Take aim. Fire!'

B

> Surgeon to theatre nurse:
> 'Scalpel . . .'
> 'Clamp . . . '
> 'Swab . . . '

C

> Mountain rescue leader to team:
> 'The stretcher's clear now. Take him up. Steady!'

D

> Supervisor to machine operator - fire drill:
> 'Turn off the master switch. Now you've got 30 seconds to get out!

ACTIVITY 20
Time guide
4 mins

Briefly, note down TWO features these orders have in common.

* _____

* _____

My list would contain the following points - perhaps you have found others as well.

* They are all spoken
* They are all short
* They are emergency situations or situations where a speedy response is critically important
* They assume people know how to carry out the order

Let's look at each of these points more closely.

* They are all spoken

The four examples we used happened to be spoken. You can have written orders, of course, and we'll be looking at these in Part D - Written Instructions.

* They are all short

Spoken orders have to be short. An order is like a starting pistol. It is a signal that action must be taken immediately and it must be simple and direct - meaning only one thing.

So a list of commands to do a number of separate jobs would just be confusing.

* They are emergency situations or situations where a speedy response is critically important

In our examples, all the orders must be carried out straightaway.

For instance, when a surgeon is giving orders to a nurse perhaps life is even at risk if the response is not immediate. In all of them, speed and timing are essential if the work of the whole team is to succeed.

In circumstances like these, everybody is prepared to respond to a brief order and is unlikely to ask why it's necessary. In fact, they would probably welcome brief, clear orders which tell them exactly what to do and which give them confidence in the team leader.

In less dramatic circumstances, however where

it is not an emergency
and
timing is not critical

orders do not generally go down very well with your workteam.

* They assume people know how to carry out the order

Orders don't explain, they just tell. So if you give an order, you must be sure that your workteam knows exactly what that order means and can respond immediately. Before you can safely give an order, thorough training and explanation must have taken place.

So give an order if:

* it's an emergency where timing is critical

* an immediate response is needed

* your workteam knows exactly how to respond

And if we do give an order, we will need to:

* keep it brief

* keep it practical

* keep it to one thing at a time

You'll also have noticed that for certain urgent or critical situations the normal courtesies "thank you" and "please" are mostly neglected and yet this is quite acceptable.

ACTIVITY 21
Time guide
5 mins

Below are some examples of orders. At the side of each write whether you think each one is a good or bad order and, very briefly note your reason.

GOOD/BAD

1) Site foreman to crane driver:
"Swing it round left 15° and down 10°. Watch the reverse tracking. And do your time sheets when you've finished."

_____

Reason: _____

2) Maintenance foreman to assistant:
"As soon as I lift this section push a wedge in as hard as you can."

_____

Reason: _____

3) Office supervisor to clerk:
"Send out these invoices. Prepare reminders from this list by lunchtime."

_____

Reason: _____

4) Warehouse supervisor to warehouseman:
"The water main's leaking. Anything stored at floor level - get it out into the corridor."

_____

Reason: _____

Well of course we don't know the whole story, but on the evidence we've got I would make the following comments.

1) The foreman is giving orders about too many things at once. Surely a reminder about time sheets can wait until a more suitable moment. So it's a bad order.

2) It sounds as though timing is critical and presumably the assistant knows exactly how to respond to the order. So it's a good order.

3) It isn't an emergency and timing isn't critical. An order like this is likely to get a pretty unfavourable response. So it's a bad order.

4) It is obviously an emergency. The order is fairly precise and clearly gives the warehouseman one urgent task to do. So it's a good order.

One last point to remember about orders:

If you decide an order is what is needed, it doesn't mean you have to sound like a sergeant major on a parade ground.

ORDERS WILL BE OBEYED IF THEY ARE FIRM, CLEAR, PRECISE AND RIGHT FOR THE JOB.

If they are in your normal speaking voice, so much the better.

2.2 Requests

Except in the circumstances we've described, most people will respond better if they are asked to do something rather than told.

Doing it this way doesn't undermine your authority as a supervisor. You win that, in this instance, by how well thought out your instruction is in the first place. A request can quite well make clear how you want the job done and when you want it done by. So giving your instructions in the form of requests doesn't mean that you lose any of your control over the job.

ASKING, RATHER THAN TELLING, MAKES YOUR WORKTEAM FEEL THAT YOU SEE THEM AS PEOPLE WITH SOMETHING TO OFFER TO THE JOB RATHER THAN JUST COGS IN THE WHEEL

REFERENCE 2 page 82 — In "EFFECTIVE SPEAKING AND THE PRESENTATION FOR THE COMPANY EXECUTIVE", Clive Goodworth looks at the different relationships which can be established with your workteam by the way you give them instructions.

ACTIVITY 22
Time guide
5 mins

Here are three examples of instructions given in the form of requests. Jot down two points which they have in common.

* Supervisor to trainee window dresser:

  "I'd like you to take all the shoes off this display. Check them against the other one of the pair for fading or damage and, if they're alright, return them to stock . . . Can you manage that?"

* Manufacturing process foreman to operative:

  "I'd like you to change locations this morning, Fred. Do a couple of hours on the first press, would you?. . . Thanks."

* Warehouse supervisor to warehouseman:

  "There's a special consignment just arrived from Atkinson's. Would you mind 'weighing it in' first thing, John? . . .Thanks."

* _____

  _____

* _____

  _____

I would jot down the following two points but there could well be others:

* They all contain a question: 'Can you manage that?"

  'I'd like you to . . . will you?"

  'Would you mind . . .?

* They are all personal. They talk about 'I' and 'you' rather than just putting the job itself into words.

  "I'd like you to take all the shoes off this display" rather than "Take all the shoes off this display.'

I'll include a third:

* They all contain a pause.

  The first instruction would give the trainee a chance to think about the job and then ask questions if there was something else he needed to know - perhaps where the window display stock was stored.

In the other two instructions the pause gives the person long enough to comment, ask a question, point out a problem if necessary.

All three are clear, practical and directed to a particular person. They are left in no doubt about what is to be done, but they should feel as though they have been consulted.

So that's all a request need be - a matter of saying:

'I'd like you to'
or
'Would you'
or
'Would you mind'

rather than just 'Do this'.

But it lets the people you are speaking to know they matter rather than just the job mattering.

REQUESTS GIVE THE OPPORTUNITY FOR QUESTIONS, SUGGESTIONS AND PROBLEMS WHICH MAY MAKE THE JOB EASIER IN THE LONG RUN

ACTIVITY 23
Time guide
5 mins

Take a few minutes to look at the instructions in the form of requests below. Do you think they are good or bad? What comments can you make about them? There is room to jot down brief notes beside each example.

1) Office supervisor to clerk:

'I wonder, would you mind? . . . I'd really like somebody to contact Jenkinson's about their account. Do you think I could possibly ask you . . . .?' *

2) Office supervisor to clerk:

'There's a rush on upstairs. Would you mind helping out in Data Preparation this morning, Mike . . . Thanks.' *

3) Laboratory supervisor to technician:

'Get this batch done this morning, would you? Quality Control want a report on it by midday.' *

4) Laboratory supervisor to technician:

'Quality Control want a report on this by midday. Would you make sure it's done this morning, please? . . . Thanks.' *

Well, once again we don't know the whole story but on the evidence we've got I would make the following comments.

1) The Office Supervisor sounds as though he or she hardly dare ask and this feeble attitude isn't likely to win the respect of the workteam.

   A request can still be firm - it need not sound like an apology for asking.

2) The Supervisor briefly explains the background for the request and, in the way he asks, suggests that Mike can contribute something to coping with the rush upstairs. The pause allows Mike to comment and then he's thanked for doing the job which, perhaps, isn't his regular one.

3) Well, it's not very good. It's hardly less than an order and makes only a token gesture ('would you') towards asking rather than telling.

4) It's no less urgent than the previous one but the background for the request came first and, as in example 2, what's being asked for is then seen as a useful contribution. Once again there's a pause for comment (there may be a real difficulty in getting the job done which the Laboratory Supervisor should know about). And finally, thanks. This instruction is much better than our previous three.

2.3 Hints

We said at the beginning of this section that the way you give instructions has to suit your own personality and the expectations and feelings of your workteam. The success of giving an instruction by a hint very much depends on you and your workteam understanding each other well. You have to know each other well at least as far as work is concerned.

Take this scene for instance:

The Distribution Manager, who joined the company a few weeks ago, walks through the warehouse with the Supervisor and remarks, 'I'm not too happy about the state of the Goods In area.'

This could mean one of several things and doing something about it could involve various people.

He may mean, for instance, that he thinks working conditions in the Goods In area are poor and he intends to see what improvements can be made.

ACTIVITY 24
Time guide
4 mins

Can you think of two other ways in which the Distribution Manager's remark: 'I'm not too happy about the state of the Goods In area' could be interpreted?

* _____

_____

* _____

_____

Well, there are all sorts of possibilities. Here are just three:

* He may mean that the Goods In area is dirty or untidy and the Supervisor should do something about it.

* He may mean that the Goods In area is dirty and he intends to have something done about it by somebody else. (Perhaps he has a coat of paint in mind.)

* He may mean that he's not happy with the system being used in the Goods In area. In that case is he planning to do something himself, or does he expect the Supervisor to do something about it or will he call in a Work Study Engineer to look at the system? We don't know.

Let's say the Distribution Manager has worked in the company for some time and makes a point of walking round the warehouse with the Supervisor once or twice a week. Now if he drops hints about things he wants improved which he then chases up within a week, then the Supervisor would understand.

'I'm not too happy about the state of the Goods In area'

in this case would be a precise instruction to get it cleaned up and better organised before the Distribution Manager came round again.

THE SUCCESS OF HINTS AS A WAY OF GIVING INSTRUCTIONS DEPENDS VERY MUCH ON HOW WELL YOUR STYLE IS UNDERSTOOD BY YOUR WORKTEAM AND HOW QUICK THEY ARE TO TAKE A HINT!

If you do have this understanding with your workteam then a hint has some advantages. For example:

* It allows the person you are speaking to to use his or her own initiative.

  Let's go back for a moment to the Distribution Manager hinting to the Supervisor:

  'I'm not too happy about the state of the Goods In area."

  The Supervisor can use his own initiative about what needs doing and how it should be done. The Distribution Manager is perhaps being careful not to invade an area of responsibility which he feels rightly belongs to the Supervisor.

* It can also be an informal way of offering the workteam a challenge, as in the example which follows:

  'I'm glad reporting errors were down this week. Still fifty a week is still a bit much, isn't it?'

  This is really an instruction to reduce reporting errors to below fifty a week, given in the form of a hint.

* Finally, a hint can be a mild way of making a criticism and of telling somebody what is expected of him in future.

  Here's an example:

  'I didn't notice you at the Safety Training session this morning. There's another one on Thursday.'

  This approach is low-key enough for the person spoken to to feel he can explain why he wasn't at the Safety Training session if he has a reason. If not, he is left in no doubt that he had better get himself to the next one.

  So a hint can be a very effective way of:

  * giving an instruction which allows your workteam to use initiative

  * giving your workteam a challenge

  * giving a mild reprimand and saying what is to be done in future

But you can only be sure:

A HINT WILL SUCCEED IF YOU AND YOUR
WORKTEAM UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER WELL

3 Things to avoid

Before moving off this topic of ways of giving instructions, it will be useful to remind ourselves of some ways best avoided. Three ways come to mind:

* Pleas
* Passing the buck
* Offensive language and gestures

Let's look at each in turn:

3.1 Pleas

It's easy enough if you are tired or under pressure or dealing with somebody very awkward to plead with him to cooperate.

Let's look at this example.

ACTIVITY 25
Time guide
5 mins

Foreman to maintenance fitter:

> 'Look I'm going to have hell to pay if this machine breaks down again. I know how you feel about it but please will you keep it running somehow. Give us a break, please.

Would you say this or something similar in your workplace?

What do you think about this as an instruction?

What do you think the result of this instruction would be?

Take a few minutes to look at what the foreman says again and jot down your comments.

* _____
_____
* _____
_____
* _____
_____

Well we've probably all given an instruction like that at some point and it may have worked. In that case, it was a lucky escape.

The maintenance fitter in our example may just have taken pity on the foreman or he may have liked him and done what he wanted as a personal favour. But you can't supervise a workteam on the basis of their pity or personal regard for you for very long.

So, on balance, I would say that this is not a good instruction.

The foreman is putting himself in a weak position in two ways:

* He suggests that he personally will be in trouble, presumably with more senior management, if the machine goes down again - 'Look, I'm going to have hell to pay if this machine breaks down again.' Well that's his problem, not one he should pass on to his workteam.

  He puts himself in a weak position with the fitter by saying 'Give us a break, please!' This sounds as though the fitter, or the job, is already causing him more trouble than he can cope with. So he has thrown away the authority of his position as foreman and he may find it hard to win it back next time.

* He asks for the machine to be kept running as a personal favour rather than because it's necessary for the job to be done. But supposing no matter how he tries, the fitter can't keep the machine running. Then, as well as the job not being done, he has also let down the foreman on a personal level and this can, in time, put an unnecessary strain on working relationships.

IT'S UNWISE TO ASK YOUR WORKTEAM TO DO SOMETHING WHICH IS PART OF THE JOB AS A PERSONAL FAVOUR

3.2 Passing the buck

ACTIVITY 26
Time guide
3 mins

1)

'Divisional Command says this is urgent. Process it immediately.'

2)

'Mr. Alsopp isn't very pleased with last week's figures. Try and do something about it this week, will you?'

3)

'Head Office wants this return in triplicate. Search me why, but that's what you'll have to do.'

4

'Make sure you fill in the shift report Fred. The computer says we haven't been giving them enough information.'

These instructions all have one thing in common. What is it?

*

They rely on somebody or something else - Divisional Command, Mr. Alsopp, Head Office or the computer - to give the instruction impact.

Do you think using somebody else to give an instruction impact <u>weakens</u> or <u>strengthens</u> your position as supervisor?

Generally, it weakens it.

There may be times when you are glad of support from somebody more powerful than yourself but, in each of our examples, the person giving the instruction is putting the responsibility for it on to somebody or something else and is not taking the responsibility himself.

In fact, in all of them, there is the suggestion that the person speaking doesn't understand or support the instruction.

If you look at examples 3 and 4 again I think you'll agree that it sounds as though he couldn't answer any questions about the job which might reasonably be asked.

Have you noticed that in examples 1, 3 and 4, the higher authority dragged in for support isn't even somebody with a name? It's a vague power - Divisional Command, Head Office, the computer - who can't be pinned down to a particular person and so can't be challenged. That's usually a sign of really weak supervision.

IF YOU HAVE TO GIVE AN INSTRUCTION - MAKE SURE PEOPLE KNOW THAT YOU WANT IT CARRIED OUT

REFERENCES 3 and 4 page 82

"SUPERVISORY STUDIES" by P W Betts and "SUPERVISORY MANAGEMENT" by David Evans each give a slightly different and more detailed breakdown of ways of giving instructions which you might be interested to look up.

3.3 Offensive language and gestures

Finally, let's look briefly at two ways of giving an instruction which can sometimes cause trouble.

* Swearing

As a general rule, the best advice to any supervisor about swearing is - don't!

Your workteam won't think any the worse of you if you don't swear even if they do - they certainly will think the worse of you if you do swear and they don't. In extreme cases, foul language can even be grounds for dismissal.

However, words which are felt to be swear words vary very much from one group to another. Quite possibly you are used to language at work which you would not use at home and you don't find the change at all difficult to make.

So perhaps more important to you as a supervisor is the consideration that most swearing tends to be basically hostile and aggressive.

'Mike and Harry, will you move those boxes to the loading bay, please.'

This is a straightforward request. If we give the same instruction like this:

'Will you b.....s move those boxes to the loading bay?'

then the whole thing becomes more aggressive.

So, if you swear, you run the risk of increasing the level of conflict and aggression between yourself and your workteam.

Conflict and aggression in themselves are not unhealthy but you may feel there is enough around without encouraging more.

* Gestures

Many people find it difficult even to talk without using their hands as well. Quite possibly, you have to show people with your hands what you mean when you're giving instructions.

In some work places, if it's very noisy or your workteam is spread over a large area, you may have to use gestures to make yourself understood.

But just as words mean different things in different languages, so do gestures. For instance, a thumbs up gesture, far from meaning thanks or approval is, to some nationalities, extremely offensive.

So, if you supervise people from different racial backgrounds from your own, make sure they understand the meaning of your gestures.

Before we go on to Section C, you might like to spend a few minutes hardening up what you've learned in this section by answering the following Self Check.

If you're not sure of the answer, flick back through the section rather than guessing:

SELF CHECK 3
Time guide
10 mins

1) Depending on the circumstances, there are three good ways of giving an instruction. What are they?

   * _____
   * _____
   * _____

Fill in the blanks in the next seven sentences with a suitable word or words.

2) How you give an instruction affects how your workteam _____ about it.

3) Orders may be the best way of giving instructions if it is _____.

4) To give instructions in the form of orders, you must be sure that your workteam knows _____.

5) Most people prefer to be _____ not _____ what to do.

6) Instructions given as requests make your workteam feel _____.

7) A request followed by a brief pause allows the person you are speaking to, to _____.

8) For a hint to be successful you and your workteam must _____ .

9) Hints have three advantages. What are they?

   * _____
   * _____
   * _____

10) There are three ways of giving instructions you should avoid. What are they?

   * _____
   * _____
   * _____

The answer to this self check is here in the following words, so you'll need to check your answers carefully. 1) The three good ways of giving an instruction are orders, requests and hints 2) You could use feels or thinks 3) You could use urgent, an emergency or critical 4) You could use what to do, how to do the job or what is required 5) The first could be asked or requested and the second word could be told or ordered 6) Words like valued, important, or they matter are suitable here 7) We could use ask questions or raise queries 8) We could write know each other well or understand each other. In all these cases there may be other words with the same meaning which are equally suitable 9) The advantages of hints are: They allow a person to use their own initiative. They allow you to offer your workteam a challenge informally and they allow you to reprimand somebody informally and to tell them what is expected in the future 10) Three ways to avoid are: pleading, passing the buck, offensive language and gestures. None of these will help, they will all hinder carrying out instructions.

4 Summary

Forms of Instructions:

* Orders * Requests * Hints

An Order

* should deal with one thing only
* should be short
* is appropriate where

  there is an emergency

  timing is critical

  the person knows exactly how to respond

A Request

* allows poeple to ask questions, make comment or suggestions
* helps develop cooperative attitudes

A Hint

* works well when supervisors and workteam know each other well
* when they do know each other well hints are effective for:
  * giving an instruction which allows for initiative
  * giving a challenge
  * giving a mild reprimand and saying what is to be done in the future

General comment for all forms of instruction:

It should take into account

* job circumstances
* your personality
* personal feelings

The things to avoid are:

* pleading
* passing the buck
* offensive language and gestures

PART C AFTER THE INSTRUCTION

1 Introduction

In this section we're going to look as what happens once you've given an instruction.

It would be a mistake to think that your part in an instruction ends once it has been given. There's more to it than that.

You have to make sure of at least three things:

CHECK-OUT

* that the instruction was understood and is likely to be carried out correctly

FOLLOW UP

* after a suitable length of time, to see that the job has actually been done because the responsibility for it is still yours

APPRECIATE

* If what you asked your workteam to do was particularly difficult or disagreeable or needed an extra effort from them. You could let them know that their effort is appreciated.

As a supervisor you are very dependent on their cooperation and goodwill and that is something which has to be regularly nurtured. Making sure you thank them for extra effort is one way of doing this.

2 THREE steps to take

We will look at each of these three steps to take after the instruction is given.

2.1 Check-out

ACTIVITY 27
Time guide
2 mins

In Part B we talked about the importance of leaving a pause at the end of an instruction, particularly if it is given as a request. This was to allow the person you are speaking to

* _____

(fill in the blanks)

I would write:

* ask questions

* make suggestions

* mention possible problems

Any of these or similar words would be a suitable answer here.

This gives whoever you are talking to a chance to give you the benefit of their view of the job or, if they are new to the job, to iron out any difficulties or misunderstandings before going any further.

But is a pause necessarily enough?

How can you be <u>sure</u> that what you said has been understood?

ACTIVITY 28
Time guide
2 mins

If you had just explained a new process to somebody which of the following questions do you think would make you feel most confident that that person could now do the job?

* 'Do you understand?'

* 'Is that alright?'

* 'Now, can <u>you</u> explain to me what you ought to do?'

* 'Now, let me see you do it all the way through.'

I would say:

* 'Now, let me see you do it all the way through'.

Since you want someone to <u>do</u> something, the surest way to check that he understands is actually to ask him to do it while you watch.

Of course, this isn't always possible. Perhaps you've been giving instructions on what to do in a situation which doesn't arise very often and which isn't easy to practise. For example an emergency procedure like washing out somebody's eyes with water if he has got a harmful chemical in them is not an easy practice.

With little chance of practising beforehand you will have to rely on:

* 'Now, can <u>you</u> explain to me what you ought to do?'

(You might also decide to back up your instructions with a written reminder. We'll be looking at this in Part D - Written Instructions.)

This will at least get the person you are instructing to describe what he would do. If he can do this you can probably assume that he understands what you said although you still don't know if he could actually do it. This is not as good as asking them to do it, but it is better than nothing.

And nothing is probably what you would get if you ask questions like:

* 'Do you understand?'

* 'Is that alright?'

Nobody likes to lose face or to appear difficult so it is tempting to answer 'Yes' to either questions then guess or ask somebody else later for the information which he lacks.

You might find it difficult to ask an experienced member of your workteam to repeat or demonstrate what you had just told him but you do need to check that your instructions had been understood.

ACTIVITY 29
Time guide
10 mins

John Peters supervises a team of sales staff, Jim, Mary, Meg and Simon and he has just finished giving them instructions on providing a new product range. Previously the company has manufactured aerosol cleaners and polishes for house use but the new product range is aimed at the house plant market and contains aerosol packs of leaf cleaners and fungicides and fertilizers which can be sprayed on to the leaves.

Sales staff will now have to approach garden centres and flower shops as well as their usual outlets which involves quite a re-think of their approach.

Jot down a few questions which John Peters could ask which would help him to make sure his sales team had understood the point of the instructions he had given them.

* _____

_____

* _____

_____

* _____

_____

Well, there are all sorts of possible answers.

I suggest these for a start:

* 'How are you going to start the new promotion in your area, Simon?'

* 'How many new contracts do you think you'll be able to get round next week, Meg?'

* 'How many of your current contracts do you think you can interest in the new products, Jim?'

* 'Flower shops are something new for us, Meg. What do you think we've got to look out for especially?'

* 'This new line means spreading the net a bit wider. How are you going to cope with the extra contracts, Mary?'

You notice that none of these questions can be answered YES or NO. They all make the person asked the question think about the problem before they give their views or plans and this should give you a chance to estimate how well they have understood you.

So follow up your instructions immediately you have given them by:

asking someone to <u>do</u> the job

or

asking him to <u>explain</u> how to do the job

or, if you are dealing with someone with plenty of experience asking a few questions about the job which can't be answered 'Yes' or 'No'.

EXTENSION 3
page 81

A BBC video, although primarily dealing with Training, contains some interesting points on giving instructions.

2.2 Follow up

Who is responsible for making sure the work done by your team is completed - you or members of your workteam?

Well we have to say you are.

You hope that everybody in your workteam has a responsible attitude to the job but, in the end, the responsibility for seeing that work is done is the supervisor's - yours.

In Part A we talked about the importance of saying WHEN you want a job done by as a way of keeping control of the work of your team.
So you say things like:

'I'd like this done straightaway please'.

'Can you finish this by midday?'

'Let me know as soon as you've finished this.'

But questions and comments like this are no use unless you follow up.

ACTIVITY 30
Time guide
3 mins

At 8.45 the Quality Control Supervisor asks a technician to test a certain batch of material straightaway - it's urgent. But he doesn't ask for the results until the following morning and that was the third supposedly urgent batch that week.

Jot down how you think the technician is likely to react next time that Supervisor asks him to do something straightaway because it's urgent.

* _____

_____

What do you think has happened to the Supervisor's control over this particular technician's work output?

* _____

_____

_____

Next time the supervisor asks that particular technician to test a batch straightaway the technician is likely to feel that any time that day will do and that what the supervisor calls urgent isn't usually that urgent. He is likely to start to decide his own priorities instead of doing what the supervisor asks. So the supervisor has lost control over that technician's output by failing to follow up his own instructions.

So, it's important to follow up any instructions you have given for two reasons:

* to make sure the work is done

* to maintain control over the work of your workteam

When you are following up an instruction, you may not always need to say anything as direct as

"Have you finished yet?"

It may be enough that you come round at all or you may just need to say something like 'Everything alright?' to find out as much as you need to know.

You may even find that you actually say more about football results than the job but you have satisfied yourself that the work has been done. Then your workteam will know that you make a habit of coming round and will have noticed what's being done.

FERENCE 5
ge 82

In "SUPERVISORY STUDIES" by P W Betts the author discusses possible causes of a poor response if you find that, when you follow-up, your instructions haven't be carried out to your satisfaction.

2.3 Appreciate

Finally, it can be very important to make a point of thanking members of your workteam when a job, which has been particularly hard in some way, has been completed.

ACTIVITY 31
Time guide
5 mins

Give TWO examples of special situations of work where a word of thanks would be appreciated:

eg when somebody stays on the urgent job for 5 minutes over their finishing time.

* _____

_____

* _____

_____

The examples you have given will, of course, depend on what you do at work but if we could compare several answers I expect we should find that you have given examples which come in the following categories:

* Work done in unusually disagreeable conditions - dirty, hot, cold, uncomfortable, noisy

* Work done under unusual pressure or done for an unusually long period

* Work which is beyond what you normally expect from your workteam.

And it does no harm to thank people occasionally just for carrying out their normal job too. It doesn't take much effort to say 'Thanks' - the improvement in relations can be considerable.

ACTIVITY 32
Time guide
4 mins

Suppose you have worked hard on getting a new project going at work. At the end of a hard, hectic day which may have been a success or a total disaster, your manager says to you:

'I know you put a lot into that. Thanks for your help'

Jot down how you might feel about yourself, your job and your relationship with your boss in response to his thanks.

* About yourself - _____

_____

* About your job - _____

_____

* About your relationship - _____

_____

You're likely to feel that what you've done has been noticed and that, as a result, you have been noticed.

You probably feel that your contribution was useful and that you are a valuable member of a team rather than just a cog in the wheel.

You are likely to feel that you are getting your share of the credit for anything which is achieved, rather than all the credit going to a higher level.

You are more likely to feel well-disposed towards whoever thanked you and are more likely to be willing to help out in future.

(I wonder if you wrote or were tempted to write something cynical in response to the last activity like

'I'd wonder what else he wanted' or

'I'd wonder what had come over him'!

If you did, then that just goes to show what happens to attitudes at work if you don't get thanks and recognition of your personal effort fairly regularly. I hope your workteam doesn't end up feeling the same way about you).

This brings us to the end of the whole process of giving instructions which we've said involved three things. Let's remind ourselves of what they were:

* CHECK OUT - that we've been understood

* FOLLOW UP - while the job is being done and when it has been done

* APPRECIATE - what's been done

In Part D we'll be looking at when and how to put your instructions in writing. Before we do, spend a few minutes on a Self Check on steps to take after any instruction is given. If you are not sure of the answers, look back through the section rather than guessing. The questions are arranged in the order in which they occur in the section.

SELF CHECK 4
Time guide
10 mins

1) Once you have given an instruction, you have to make sure of three things. What are they?

* _____

* _____

* _____

2) Which of these two questions would be more help to you if you were trying to find out if your instructions had been understood?

1. 'Have you got that alright?'

2. 'So what are the first three things you have to do in this operation?'

Write in 1 or 2 _____

3) To find out if you've been understood, is it better to:

1. ask someone to do a certain job

2. ask someone to explain to you how to do it?

Write in 1 or 2 _____

4) What are the advantages of questions which can't be answered 'Yes' or 'No' as a way of checking somebody's understanding of your instructions?

* _____

* _____

5) What are the two reasons why you should follow up after giving an instruction?

* _____

* _____

6) In what circumstances should you make a point of thanking your workteam when they have carried out your instructions?

* _____

* _____

* _____

The answer to this self check is here in the following words, so you'll need to check your answers carefully. 1) You have to make sure that the instruction was understood, that the instruction is carried out and that you thank people for special effort 2) The most helpful question is "so what are the first three things you have to do in this operation?" To ask "have you got that alright?" is likely to be answered with a nod or "yes" - they might not wish to appear slow or incompetent by answering "no" 3) It is better to ask someone to do the jobs to be certain he understands. If this is impossible though, you may be forced to ask him if he can explain how to do it, even though that is second best 4) Firstly questions which can't be answered 'Yes' or 'No' force people to think about the job and secondly what they say gives you a chance to assess their understanding of what you have told them 5) Two of the reasons for following up after giving an instruction are to make sure the job is completed and to maintain your control over the work being done by our workteam 6) Thanks are appropriate when the work has been done under disagreeable circumstances, when the work has been done under unusual pressure or for a long period and when the work has been beyond what you actually expect from your workteam.

3. Summary

Our three things to do AFTER GIVING AN INSTRUCTION:

* CHECK OUT * FOLLOW-UP * APPRECIATE

* CHECK OUT instructions immediately to make sure your instructions have been understood.

* FOLLOW UP instructions later to:

  make sure work is completed

  maintain your control of work done by your work team

* APPRECIATE your workteam's efforts if your instructions have caused them extra difficulty:

  in disagreeable conditions

  under unusual pressure or for an unusually long period

PART D WRITTEN INSTRUCTIONS

1 Introduction

Almost all the points we've looked at so far apply equally to written and spoken orders and instructions.

Since we all talk far more than we write things down, probably most of our instructions will be spoken. But there are some situations where they must be written down because:

they affect a lot of people

they need special emphasis

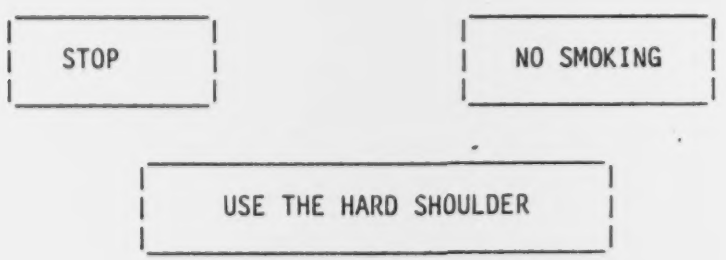
they need to be referred to at a later date

they are needed when learning the job

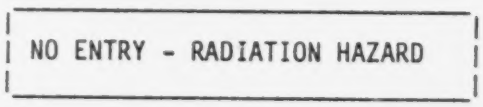
If instructions have to be written down, it follows that we may not be there at the time they are needed to iron out any misunderstandings, so extra care is needed to make sure our instructions are carried out correctly first time and every time.

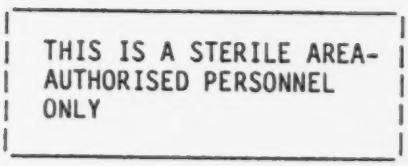
2 Written Instructions

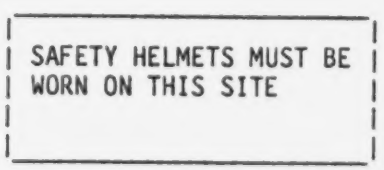
We are all used to seeing a number of written orders around us which we generally obey. For example:

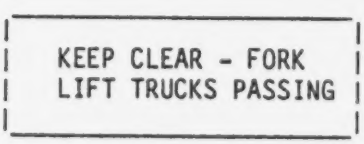


Some typical workplace notices/instructions.









ACTIVITY 33
Time guide
3 mins

Jot down one reason why you think it is necessary for these instructions to be written rather than spoken.

Two reasons why these instructions need to be written are:

* because they affect a lot of people

* because they need special emphasis

Let's look at each of these in more detail and consider how they can apply to you and your communication with your own workteam.

2.1 When instructions affect a lot of people

Let's look at one example of a written order again:

SAFETY HELMETS MUST BE WORN ON THIS SITE

Suppose this is displayed on a building site. Each supervisor for each separate contractor on the site will probably have told his own workteam that they have to wear a safety helmet and will have followed up this instruction with more or less enthusiasm depending on how he supervises his team.

But how many other people are likely to come on the site? Possibly:

inspectors from Health & Safety Executive

inspectors from banks and insurance companies

building inspectors

management

the client for whom the site is being developed

other potential clients of the contractors'

and there are probably more!

All of them must be given the same instruction whenever and wherever they come on site. Though you might tell and remind people when possible, prominently displayed notices are essential to be sure that everybody receives the same instruction.

ACTIVITY 34
Time guide
10 mins

Take a minute or two to list all the people who come through your work area, as we did for the building site in the previous example.

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

Write down three of any dangers and special conditions in your area which you tell your workteam about but which <u>everybody</u> needs to know about.

* _____

* _____

* _____

Are there prominently displayed notices? YES/NO _____

If not, why not?

* _____

_____

And what can <u>you</u> do about it?

* _____

_____

It's quite possible that any important special conditions in your work place have already been provided for by the Safety Officer or Safety Representatives and your instructions are already backed up by prominently displayed notices. But perhaps you have thought of something which isn't immediately obvious to somebody who doesn't work in your area - after all, as supervisor, you are in the best position to do this.

Perhaps you can either arrange to have notices put up yourself or can point out the need for them to your manager or your Safety Officer so that everybody coming through your area receives the same instruction.

2.2 Where instructions need special emphasis

Instructions may need to be written because of their importance.

If it is a potentially dangerous situation you are dealing with then, under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, you are bound to make every reasonable effort to give your workteam adequate instructions to ensure their own and everybody else's safety. Exactly how that is done in your own area may depend on you.

Look at this example:

ACTIVITY 35
Time guide
5 mins

You are a supervisor in the production department of a company which manufactures resins for the paint industry. Work in your area involves mixing raw materials, including "chemical X" in open vessels. "chemical X" produces very irritating vapours which can cause eye and breathing problems as well as a skin rash so your workteam have to wear gas-tight goggles, breathing equipment and protective clothing whenever they use "chemical X".

You have talked to them about the precautions they must take and you check periodically to make sure they are following instructions, but you also want to make sure that they are reminded what to do every time they use "chemical X".

Jot down some of the places where written instructions on the precautions to be taken if you use "chemical X" should be displayed in your work area.

* _____
* _____
* _____

Well, this is a matter of personal judgement unless your company already has an established procedure on this. I would want to see written instructions in the following places at least:

* on all containers containing "chemical X"
* on the vessels in which "chemical X" was going to be mixed
* in any operating procedures which the workteam might refer to

* and finally I would want to see a notice warning anybody not involved in the job to stay out of the area while "chemical X" was in use - something like this:

NO ENTRY

DANGER

"CHEMICAL X" VAPOURS

You may feel other matters are important enough to need written instructions to back up what you say even though they are nothing to do with safety.

Suppose you are changing to a metric weighing system. Your workteam have been weighing materials for years in pounds and now they have to weigh in kilos. No doubt you would have arranged training for them and told them of the reason for the change but even so, a written reminder:

WEIGH ALL RAW MATERIALS RECEIVED IN KILOS
NOT POUNDS

at the point where materials are to be weighed will be useful to drive home the point of the instruction. The lack of it could result in valuable time being wasted because spoken instructions were forgotten.

So, if it's important, make doubly sure your instructions are carried out and follow up spoken instructions with a written reminder, prominently displayed.

2.3 When instructions need to be referred to at a later date

We've just mentioned the importance of written instructions where there is a danger that members of your workteam may forget what you said.

We all tend to forget what is said to us unless we have some special reason to remember. This is particularly likely to happen in two circumstances. Let's discover what these are:

ACTIVITY 36
Time guide
3 mins

Look at these work situations and write down briefly ONE reason why you think written instructions would be necessary in each particular case.

1) If you take the last box of a particular form which your department uses from the stationery store, you have to fill in a request form to re-order supplies. Your department only uses four boxes a year.

* _____

2) If you receive any damaged boxes from suppliers you have to put them to one side and contact the Quality Assurance Department. Damaged boxes only account for 1% of goods going through your department.

* _____

3) Before the annual shutdown, you have to drain all your plant of solvents, put all solvents in sealed drums and remove them from the area and lock off all solvent lines.

* _____

Can you see that none of these situations occur very often. That's the reason for needing written instructions.

1) Only four boxes a year are used so, depending on how many are kept in stock, you won't have to order more than every three months at most.

2) Damaged goods only account for 1% of goods going through the department so probably (though not necessarily) they will occur fairly rarely.

3) Solvents only have to be drained, removed and locked off once a year, before the annual shutdown.

I hope you would agree that you definitely need written instructions in many cases because:

SPOKEN INSTRUCTIONS ARE LIKELY TO BE FORGOTTEN BETWEEN ONE OCCASION WHEN ANY OF THESE SITUATIONS OCCURRED AND THE NEXT

ACTIVITY 37
Time guide
1 min

Fill in the blank with a suitable word or words.

So, you need written instructions for situations which _____

_____ .

A suitable response would be 'don't occur very often' or words meaning something similar.

A further circumstance in which you need to write instructions is if you expect somebody to remember or act on a number of separate items of information.

Look at this example.

This is part of a checklist for maintenance engineers who will be working during annual shutdown in the Production Department on work which may be considered too hazardous to do while the plant is in operation.

This is called 'safe work permit' work. A special permit has to be raised by the Maintenance Engineering Department and signed by the supervisor and manager of the Production Department. This is to confirm that safety precautions have been carried out before the maintenance engineers start work.

1) 'Safe Work Permits' must be raised within the Maintenance Department for any job normally requiring one. This includes:

   Welding

   Grinding or drilling

   Opening up main lines containing corrosive or flammable liquid

   Open Flame Work

   Entry into Enclosed Vessels

2) No 'Safe Work Permit' work should be carried out if the fire extinguishing sprinklers are inoperative.

3) No 'Safe Work Permit' work should be carried out during work on solvent lines.

4) No 'Safe Work Permit' work should be carried out if painting is being done nearby.

5) Locked solvent valves should be checked for leaks before 'Safe Work Permit' work takes place.

ACTIVITY 38
Time guide
2 mins

Do you think all of these items will apply every time Safe Permit Work is carried out?

YES/NO *_____

You will want all of them checked each time. However, it's quite possible that some of the conditions won't occur for several years, by which time an important instruction could well be forgotten and a serious accident could result.

ACTIVITY 39
Time guide
4 mins

Give an example of an instruction from this checklist which might not always apply each time Safe Permit Work was carried out.

* _____

Instructions 2, 3 and 4 are referring to special circumstances which may not occur very often. If no painting takes place in that area during shutdown for several years in succession, then the importance of checking this point before allowing Safe Permit Work is likely to be forgotten unless somebody has a written checklist to work from.

ACTIVITY 40
Time guide
1 min

Does it matter in which order the instructions on the checklist on 'Safe Work Permit' working are followed?

YES/NO/NOT SURE * _____

You might reasonably feel that you have to carry out 1 first and get a Safety Work Permit before any of the other points are checked out. However, it doesn't matter in which order the checks are made.

So there is no logical sequence and some points will not apply every time 'Safe Work Permit' work is done in the Production Department.

ACTIVITY 41
Time guide
1 min

Because there is no logical sequence do you think this makes it EASIER or HARDER to remember the instructions on this checklist?

* _____

WHERE THERE IS NO LOGICAL SEQUENCE OF STEPS TO THE JOB WE ARE MUCH MORE LIKELY TO FORGET AND HAVE A MUCH GREATER NEED FOR WRITTEN INSTRUCTIONS

2.4 When instructions are needed when learning the job

In contrast to our previous checklist, let's look at these instructions for switching on an alarm system and locking up an office at night and then unlocking and switching off the alarm the following morning.

GOING OUT AND LOCKING UP

1. Move telephone switch to cover red dot
2. Turn thermostast down to 0°
3. Turn key to N
4. Turn off lights
5. Leave by double doors
6. Lock door
7. Press botton A on outside of door to stop signal within 35 seconds of activating the system.

COMING IN

1. Unlock door and get to control panel within 35 seconds
2. Turn on lights
3. Turn key to D
4. Move telephone switch to uncover red dot

ACTIVITY 42
Time guide
1 min

Would you be able to carry out these instructions without being shown and told what to do as well?

YES/NO * _____

Unless you have a very similar system in your work place, I think you will probably have answered NO to that question.

How do we know, for instance, where to look for the telephone switch?

Which key do we use and where do we put it in? Where exactly is the button outside the door which stops the signal? I would certainly want to know that if I only had 35 seconds to switch off the alarm signal.

So the written checklist of instructions backs up spoken instructions and demonstration of the job. This will usually be the case in any written instructions you give to your workteam.

But once you had locked up and unlocked the office a couple of times you would know the procedure well enough to manage without reading the written instructions.

ACTIVITY 43
Time guide
2 mins

So the written instructions would then only be needed for somebody who _____.

Complete the sentence with a suitable word or words.

The sentence may be completed with: 'Hasn't done the job before' or 'is not yet fully practiced'. This might be a starter or an experienced member of the team.

Breaking down a task into steps in the right sequence can form the basis of any written instructions you have to write. In fact, if you have broken down the job carefully, you may virtually have written the instructions.

But there are a few points you have to be careful about when you expect people to READ instructions. That's what we're going to look at next but, first, spend a few minutes on a check of what we have already covered in this section.

SELF CHECK 5
Time guide
8 mins

Respond by completing each sentence with a suitable word or words.

1) _____
| OVERHEAD WORKING |
_____ You need a notice like this to instruct _____ who may pass at _____ time.

2) Written notices like the one above should be used if the conditions in the work place are at all _____.

3) Written instructions _____ spoken instructions and demonstration.

4) Written instructions are necessary for jobs which don't _____.

5) If there is no logical sequence of steps to a job we tend to _____.

6) A _____ helps when important items may be forgotten.

7) People may need written instructions to refer to, even for a routine job if _____.

The answer to this self check is here in the following words so you'll need to check your answers carefully. 1) The first word could be everybody, everyone or all. The second word could be any or all. 2) We would use dangerous or hazardous 3) We could use back up or confirm 4) We could use happen very often or occur frequently 5) We could use forget or lose track 6) We could use checklist 7) We could use they are new starters or they haven't done that job before. However, other words with the same meanings are also suitable.

3. Preparing Written Instructions

We'll look at two aspects of written instructions which are particularly important. One is the need to list steps of a job in the correct order. The other is to state what should be done and not what should not be done.

Let's look in some detail at each aspect:

3.1 Correct Order

A few pages back we looked at the instructions for locking up and unlocking an office and setting the alarm system. Look again at the instructions for Coming In:

COMING IN

1. Unlock door and get to control panel within 35 seconds
2. Turn on lights
3. Turn key to D
4. Move telephone switch to uncover red dot

Perhaps you noticed when you first read the instructions that there is something which could be improved.

ACTIVITY 44
Time guide
2 mins

If I tell you that the light switches are just inside the door and the control panel is 30 feet from the door, can you jot down briefly what is wrong with this set of instructions?

* _____

_____

_____

The problem lies in this part of the instructions:

1. Unlock door and get to control panel within 35 seconds.
2. Turn on lights.

You are not told what to do in the order in which you should do it.

Following these instructions, you are likely to come into the office, dash to the control panel and then have to rush back to the door to switch on the lights before you can see well enough to carry out instruction 3 - 'Turn the key to D'.

So it's very important to:

WRITE INSTRUCTIONS IN THE ORDER IN WHICH THEY SHOULD BE DONE

This is something which we tend to do instinctively if we are talking, particularly if we are showing somebody what to do at the same time. But failing to put things in the right order is something we are very prone to do when we write things down - partly perhaps because we try to write the best sounding sentence we can which may mean that we change round the order of our ideas.

EXTENSION 4
page 81

Clearly this is especially important if we are training somebody who is new to the job. If you're particularly concerned with giving instructions to trainees you might find it useful to look at this unit in the series.

ACTIVITY 45
Time guide
5 mins

Look at the following examples of instructions. Each of them contains two steps of a job. Some are in the right order, some are not.

Write in "correct order" or "incorrect order" as you decide.

	CORRECT/INCORRECT
1) Remove casing once mains power supply has been disconnected.	_____
2) Read the notes on Page 20 before completing this section.	_____
3) Proceed immediately if the light is green.	_____
4) Enter the security check number in departmental records before releasing the documents.	_____
5) Switch off the lights on your floor. Lock up and return the keys to security.	_____

---

1) You should first be told to disconnect the mains supply then to remove the casing, so this instruction is incorrect.

2) This is a good one because the steps are in the right order for the person trying to do the job, so this instruction is correct. 'Complete this section having read the notes on Page 20' would be about the least helpful way possible of giving this instruction.

3) You need to check FIRST that the light is green. If it is, proceed immediately, so this instruction is incorrect.

4) Clear example of correct order.

5) Three simple stages, in the correct order.

ACTIVITY 46
Time guide
3 mins

Here are the instructions we have already looked at for unlocking the office and switching off the alarm system, but the badly arranged part of the instructions has been left out.

Write a better version than the original which will tell anybody following the instructions what to do in the right order.

The information you need to know is that once the door is unlocked, the alarm system will trigger the alarm which will ring for 35 seconds and then automatically contact the police station. (However, it's up to you whether you think it's necessary to include all of that in the instructions.) Write each new instruction on a separate line.

COMING IN

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

You may need more lines than this.

I should rewrite the instructions like this:

COMING IN

Unlock the door. The alarm will now ring.

Switch on the lights.

Reach the control panel within 35 seconds of unlocking the door.

Turn key to D.

Move telephone switch to uncover the red dot.

Yours may be different from mine but I hope it is like mine in that the information is now in the right order and won't send anybody scurrying back from the control panel to switch on the lights!

Perhaps, like me, you also decided to include telling people that when they unlocked the door, the alarm would ring which isn't made clear in the original.

3.2 Stating what should be done

We have the choice to state what should be done OR what shouldn't be done. So what's best?

ACTIVITY 47
Time guide
3 mins

Look at these pairs of instructions. Which one in each pair do you think would be the better written instruction.

Jot down the reasons for your choice.

1. After washing, do not delay more than 15 minutes before putting instruments in the sterilizer.

2. Put the instruments in the sterilizer within 15 minutes of washing.

   * 1 or 2? Your reason: _____

   _____

3. Leave this box blank if you are hourly-paid.

4. Do not write in this box if you are hourly-paid.

   * 3 or 4? Your reason: _____

   _____

I hope you agree that these are the better instructions:

> Put the instruments in the sterilizer within 15 minutes of washing.
>
> Leave this box blank if you are hourly-paid.

The reason is that these two instructions tell anybody reading them what they <u>should</u> do. The other two instructions tell them what they shouldn't do.

Look at this 'difficult to follow' instruction:

> After washing do not delay more than 15 minutes before putting instruments in the sterilizer.

Anybody new to the job and reading this instruction has to perform some mental gymnastics to turn this negative instruction round to determine what is actually supposed to happen.

ACTIVITY 48
Time guide
5 mins

Here are some more examples of negative instructions which tell people what not to do. Rewrite them so that anybody reading them will understand what they are supposed to do:

1. Do not leave empty drums in the loading bay.

   _____

2. Documents must not be bent or folded.

   _____

3. Fill the vessel with water. Do not allow surface level to go beyond 500 litre mark.

   _____

Well, of course, the precise words we have each chosen will vary. You may feel, as I did, that to make the instructions really effective, we need to give a bit more information.

Here are my suggestions.

1. Remove any empty drums from the loading bay.
   (But we should really say where they are to be taken.)

2. Please keep documents flat.

3. Fill the vessel with water up to the 500 litre mark exactly.

So generally then,

IT'S BETTER TO WRITE INSTRUCTIONS WHICH SAY
WHAT YOU DO WANT TO HAPPEN, NOT WHAT YOU DON'T

One exception to this is where you want to change an existing practice.

Suppose you need to photocopy a certain set of forms regularly and nothing but black ink will produce a sufficiently high quality copy on your equipment.

There are several ways in which you could write an instruction to cover this. These are just three examples.

'Please complete this form in black ink.'

'Use black ink only.'

'Do not use anything except black ink on this form.'

If we also suppose that the staff are used to filling in forms in a variety of colours, using pens, pencils, and ballpoint pens, then the instruction likely to make the most impact is the last one:

'Do not use anything except black ink on this form.'

This instruction recognises the existing practice when filling in forms (that any colour will do) and says clearly what is to happen on this form (that it must be completed in black ink). The other two instructions, simply to use black ink are likely to go unnoticed.

ACTIVITY 49
Time guide
5 mins

Production reports from the three lines you supervise are normally taken at the end of each shift to the Production Manager's secretary, Angela, by the leading hand. In future though, you need to have them first to collate some figures before you pass them on.

Write an instruction to go in the shift log to cover this change.

I would write something like this:

Please do not pass production reports directly
to Angela at the end of each shift.

Please leave them on my desk.

I would put it this way round because I want to change the existing practice of taking production reports direct to the secretary. Of course, a written instruction in this case would just be a reminder. I would also have had a word with the leading hands who might want to know, among other things, why they couldn't go and see Angela any more!

So, when you are writing instructions the two main points to remember are:

* Make sure the instructions are in the right order for the person using them.

* Tell people what to do, rather than what not to do - unless you are trying to change existing practice.

Perhaps you would like to spend a few minutes on the self check before we go on to our summary.

SELF CHECK 6
Time guide
4 mins

Respond by completing each sentence with a suitable word or words.

1) When writing instructions we are more likely to put them in the _____ than when we are showing somebody what to do.

2) Written instructions should be in the order in which the _____.

3) People respond better if you tell them _____ rather than what they shouldn't do.

4) We can tell people what they shouldn't do when we wish to _____ an existing practice.

The answer to this self check is here in the following words so you'll need to check your answers carefully. 1) You could write wrong order or wrong sequence. 2) You could write job is done or task is carried out 3) You could write what they should do or what they must do 4) You could write change or modify. Other words with the same meaning are also suitable.

4 Summary

FOUR reasons for putting instructions into writing:

* WHEN THEY AFFECT A LOT OF PEOPLE
* WHEN THEY NEED SPECIAL EMPHASIS
* WHEN THEY NEED TO BE REFERRED TO AT A LATER DATE
* WHEN THEY ARE NEEDED WHEN LEARNING THE JOB

TWO circumstances where we tend to forget instructions:

* WHERE THE SITUATION DOESN'T OCCUR VERY OFTEN
* WHERE THERE IS NO LOGICAL SEQUENCE OF STEPS TO THE JOB

CHECKLISTS can be very useful for:

* ANYONE NOT FULLY FAMILIAR WITH THE TASK eg NEW STARTERS
* ENSURING NOTHING IS FORGOTTEN

Special care must be taken when writing instructions to:

* PUT THEM IN THE RIGHT ORDER FOR THE PERSON CARRYING THEM OUT
* TELL PEOPLE WHAT TO DO, NOT WHAT NOT TO DO

  UNLESS

* YOU ARE CHANGING EXISTING PRACTICE

PART E PERFORMANCE CHECKS

Time guide 60 mins

1 End Check

You may now review your understanding of the Unit as a whole by completing this group of questions. DON'T GUESS THE ANSWERS - if you're not sure, flick back into the Unit and check before responding.

If you are still unsure then put a question mark against your response before proceeding.

TRUE/FALSE

Respond to each statement by writing TRUE or FALSE in the space provided.

1. Explaining why you want a job done reinforces your instruction. _____

2. It's best to give all the information you have available, when you're telling someone what to do. _____

3. Most people prefer to be asked, not told to do something. _____

4. Hinting what you want done is never a good way of giving an instruction. _____

5. Once you've given your workteam an instruction you've done your bit. The rest is up to them. _____

6. Asking people to do something 'straight away' or 'as soon as possible' keeps them on their toes. _____

7. It's more difficult to get the steps in the right order when you write instructions than when you tell somebody. _____

8. You should never tell people what not to do. _____

COMPLETION

Respond by completing each sentence with a suitable word or words.

9. Before you give an instruction, it must be clear in your own mind what you want _____.

10. It's sometimes useful to explain _____ you want a job done if habits have become slipshod.

11. Telling your workteam the order in which you want work done enables you to meet _____.

12. You should give instructions to new starters where there are no _____ to put them off.

13. After you've given instructions for a job you should _____ that it's understood and _____ to see that it's been done.

14. If a job was particularly difficult you should _____ your workteam.

15. If instructions affect a lot of people they should be _____.

16. A _____ is a useful way of listing a series or sequence of instructions.

MULTIPLE CHOICE

Respond to each question by putting a tick against the ONE answer which is most correct.

17. If you give an instruction but the job is not carried out properly, the responsibility is:

    (a) Your workteam's

    (b) yours

    (c) nobody's

    (d) the company's

18. You can improve your workteam's attitude to a task by telling them

    (a) how

    (b) when

    (c) why

    (d) where

19. When timing is critical your instructions should be given in the form of:

    (a) requests

    (b) orders

    (c) hints

    (d) pleas

20. Hints are an effective way of giving instructions if

    (a) you're not sure what you want done

    (b) your workteam don't know you very well

    (c) you want to make a general criticism

    (d) you want to give someone the opportunity to use their initiative

21. Which of the following questions, asked at the end of an instruction, would help you to check that you have been understood?

(a) 'Do you think you've got that?'

(b) 'Right, can you repeat what I just told you?'

(c) 'Now, can I see you do that yourself?'

(d) 'Any problems?'

22. Following up your instructions after an appropriate length of time

(a) makes your workteam feel you're hounding them

(b) is part of your job as supervisor

(c) suggests that you don't trust your workteam

(d) is a waste of time

23. Which of the following would probably not need a written instruction?

(a) slight change in an existing procedure which all your workteam will do

(b) new starter learning a long but routine operation

(c) a new obstacle in your area - many people will pass it but it's big enough to see

(d) one of your workteam is required to help out in another section for a few days

24. Written instructions

(a) make sure the job is done

(b) may help someone learn a job

(c) don't make any difference

(d) show that you're an efficient supervisor

END CHECK - Checkout

Audio Tape Side 2 [illegible]e guide [illegible] mins

The answers and explanations for these End Checks are on Side 2 of our Audio Tape. Have your responses with you as you play this tape. As you listen you can check out how well you have done and make notes as you proceed.

2. Tutor Check

Time guide 60 mins

Read through this case incident, then deal with the questions which follow.

Alistair Davison takes over as supervisor in the Quality Assurance department of Scott Carmichael Products Ltd. His predecessor in the job was Fergus Dixon whom he never met but whom he understands was 'a hard man' who ruled the department with a rod of iron. If any of the workteam failed in any way, Fergus was not above abusing them loudly in front of the whole laboratory. He also tended to keep information to himself and wrote things down as little as possible so that there doesn't appear to be many written procedures or manuals in the department.

Alistair Davison is a quiet-spoken, reasonable man who feels that Fergus Dixon's style is not one which he wishes, or would be able, to adopt.

After a week or two in the job, he realises that his workteam is not very reliable, perhaps because they have no real idea of how what they do affects other departments. He also feels that they are taking advantage of the change of supervisor to slacken off in the volume and quality of work they are doing. Their methods are becoming rather slipshod. He notices that one thing they keep forgetting to do is to wash all glass vessels in four changes of clean water after they have carried out a test. Nevertheless, the pressure of work in the department is quite intense.

A new trainee technician, Susannah Mackay is joining the workteam shortly and Alistair Davison is anxious that she should get off to a good start. He will be directly responsible for instructing her on what to do when she joins the department.

You need only write one or two sentences against each of the following questions.

1. What way of giving instructions do you think would suit Alistair Davison best and why?

2. How can he make sure that his style of giving instructions isn't compared unfavourably with his predecessor's?

3. What will Alistair Davison have to do to make sure his instructions are carried out in view of his workteam's tendency to slacken off? How do you suggest he does it?

4. How do you suggest he gets them to remember about washing glass vessels four times after use?

5. How can he improve attitudes to work when he gives instructions to his workteam?

6. What suggestions can you offer on how he could instruct Susannah Mackay so that she soon becomes a confident and useful member of the workteam?

Send to Tutor

Now get your answers to your study tutor either by post or handing it over personally. You will receive your tutor's assessment and comments back through the post as soon as can be managed.

3. Work-based project

Time guide 60 mins

Select a task which members of your workteam have to do and for which no satisfactory written instructions exist.

This may be:

because they've never been written

because what instructions there are are out-of-date

because the task involves referring to several manuals or sets of instructions

because the written instructions are too technical to be of use to your workteam

Assume that you may have a new starter joining your workteam who knows nothing about how your company operates (beyond what he may have learned on the company induction course if you have one).

Write a set of instructions which new starters could use for the particular task you have selected as back-up to a training session given by you and as a checklist for doing the job on their own.

Send to Tutor

Now get your answers to your study tutor either by post or handing it over personally. You will receive your tutor's assessment and comments back through the post as soon as can be managed.

PART F UNIT REVIEW

1 Return to Objectives

Having completed your work on this unit let's review how you feel about each of our five opening objectives. I'll repeat them here and add comment.

You should be better able to:

* GIVE PLANNED INSTRUCTIONS WHICH SAY PRECISELY WHAT YOU MEAN

No doubt you were already experienced in giving instructions - it's an inescapable part of the job. But I hope a consideration of how important it is to be clear in you own mind what you want done and what you expect the end result to be has helped you to analyse your own instructions more carefully. And, if you find yourself using the checklist WHAT, WHO, WHY, HOW, WHEN and WHERE then you have achieved this objective. Now to the next two objectives -

You should be beter able to:

* SELECT THE WAY OF GIVING AN INSTRUCTION THAT BEST MEETS THE NEEDS OF THE JOB

* GET THE BEST RESPONSE FROM YOUR WORKTEAM

We often tend to react to circumstances as they arise rather than giving the matter any conscious thought - so we might give an abrupt order in an emergency and a more reasonable request when the pressure isn't so great.

I hope what we have said about orders, requests and hints has helped you to become more aware of the predictable effect they have on other people which, perhaps, in the heat of the moment we tend to forget about. It may also have given you an opportunity to think about the relationship between yourself and your workteam and to focus on a style of giving instructions which best suits that relationship and the demands of the job. So to our fourth objective.

You should be better able to:

* MONITOR RESULTS TO MAKE SURE THE WORK HAS BEEN DONE AND YOUR WORKTEAM'S ATTITUDE IS FAVOURABLE

Giving effective instructions doesn't end when your workteam go away to do the job. Your responsibility as a supervisor is to follow them up to make sure the job is done as you intended and within any limits (such as time limits) that you made clear in the instruction. So checking that your instructions have been understood, following up the work and showing your appreciation for your workteam's effort, when appropriate, is all part of the instruction process. If you now think about all these stages when you ask someone to do a job then you have achieved this ojective. Finally the fifth objective.

You should be better able to:

* DECIDE WHEN WRITTEN INSTRUCTIONS ARE NECESSARY

Often the decison to supply written notices and instructions is taken out of our hands. Notices which affect people's safety or comfort are authorised by the Safety Officer. Manuals and operating procedures are supplied by the manufacturer or the management services department or some other section of the company.

But people need written and spoken instructions in different situations and sometimes need one to back up the other. If you now feel that giving your workteam written instructions may be an effective way in some circumstances of helping them to do the job efficiently and that you have a better idea of how to write good instructions, then you have achieved this objective.

I hope that this work you have done was enjoyable and useful enough to encourage you to continue in your studies.

2 Extensions

I recommend that you take up as many of these extensions as you can. They will further increase your understanding and interest. You will also be able to check out a number of the ideas that I mention in the Unit. The extra time and effort will prove very worthwhile.

EXTENSION 1 Video Cassette 'The Need to Know'
Number 5 in the BBC series 'SUPERVISOR'

Working supervisors give some interesting views on how much, in their experience, their workteams want to know about the job they are doing.

EXTENSION 2 Video Cassette 'I'm in Charge'
Number 3 in the BBC series "SUPERVISOR'

In this programme working supervisors talk about how they develop a style of supervision which suits their own personality and those of their workteams.

EXTENSION 3 Video Cassette 'Who's for Training'
Number 6 in the BBC series 'SUPERVISOR'

Although this programme is about training, it contains some interesting ideas and comments about giving instructions to the new starter on the job.

EXTENSION 4 Choice Unit: 81 - Training Sessions

Author - Rick Holden

Publisher - Northern Regional Management Centre

These extension opportunities can all be taken up via your Support Centre.

They will either have the materials or will arrange that you have access to the materials. However it may be more convenient to check out the materials with your Personnel or Training people at work - they may well give you access. There are other good reasons for approaching your own people, for example they will become aware of your interest and you can involve them in your development.

3 References

REFERENCE 1 Book: Effective Speaking and Presentation for the Company Executive

Author: Clive Goodworth

Publisher: Business Books

See Page 24 for a different look at the 'component parts' of an instruction.

REFERENCE 2 Book: Effective Speaking and Presentation for the Company Executive

Author: Clive Goodworth

Publisher: Business Books

See Chapter 3 for an examination of different ways of giving instructions and the relationship that is estalished with your workteam.

REFERENCE 3 Book: Supervisor Studies

Author: P W Betts

Publisher: Macdonald and Evans

See Chapter XII Pages 184 - 186 for another breakdown of the ways you can give instructions.

REFERENCE 4 Book: Supervisory Management

Author: David Evans

Publisher: Holt, Rinehart and Winston

See Section 7.2.4 on Orders and Instructions. It contains a slightly different breakdown of ways of giving instructions than are given in this Unit.

REFERENCE 5 Book: Supervisory Studies

Author: P W Betts

Publisher: Macdonald and Evans

Chapter XII Pages 186-187 - Causes of Low Response in Others.

In this chapter the importance of follow-up is mentioned. You might find it useful to read what the author has to say about the causes for a poor response if you find your instructions had not been carried out as well as you expected.

These references can all be taken up via your Support Centre. They will either have the materials or will arrange that you have access to the materials. However check with your Personnel or Training people at work - they may well give you access. There are other good reasons for approaching your own people, for example they will become more aware of your interest and you can involve them in your development.

If you do wish to make use of these references then don't think that you must read them right through. Just dip into them for a slighly wider treatment of the topic raised by the unit.

I should warn that the language and style of the writing is often difficult to cope with. So don't struggle with it too much. Do what I do when in difficulty, put the book back on the shelf and find a better one!

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